

What is claimed is:

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4. A process according to claim 3, wherein the solvent is selected from the group consisting of anhydrous tetrahydrofuran, toluene, xylene, benzene or cyclohexane.

5. A process according to claim 2, wherein the optically active enantiomer of
5 2-(methylamino)-1-phenyl-1-propanol is (1R,2R)-2-(methylamino)-1-phenyl-1-propanol
or (1S,2S)-2-(methylamino)-1-phenyl-1-propanol.

6. A process according to claim 2, wherein the acid having a pK_a below 5 is
selected from the group consisting of HX, wherein X is a halide, H_2SO_4 , HNO_3 , H_3PO_4 ,
10 HPF_6 , HBF_4 , $HClO_4$, C_1 - C_{10} sulphonic acids, and C_1 - C_{10} mono-, di- or tri-carboxylic acid.

7. A process for optical resolution of a compound of [(1RS,2RS,4aSR,8aSR)-
2-hydroxy-2,5,5,8a-tetramethyldecahydronaphthalen-1-yl]acetic acid or an alkaline salt
thereof, which comprises treating the compound with an optically active enantiomer of
15 2-(methylamino)-1-phenyl-1-propanol or an ammonium salt thereof.

8. A process according to claim 7, wherein the optically active enantiomer is
obtainable by the reaction of an optically active enantiomer of 2-(methylamino)-1-phenyl-
1-propanol with an acid having a pK_a below 5.

20 9. A process for obtaining (+)-sclareolide or (-)-sclareolide which comprises
treating a compound of formula (I) or (I') respectively, defined as in claim 1, with an acid
having a pK_a below 5 and by a thermal treatment at a temperature comprised between
60°C and 150°C.

25 10. A process for obtaining (+)-sclareolide or (-)-sclareolide which comprises
hydrolyzing (\pm)-sclareolide into a corresponding [(1RS,2RS,4aSR,8aSR)-2-hydroxy-
2,5,5,8a-tetramethyldecahydronaphthalen-1-yl]acetic acid or a salt thereof.

30 11. A process for obtaining (+)-sclareolide or (-)-sclareolide which comprises
a process according to claim 2.

12. A process for obtaining (+)-sclareolide or (–)-sclareolide which comprises treating a compound of formula I or I' as defined in claim 1 as an intermediate or a starting material under conditions that favor optical resolution of the (+)-sclareolide or (–)-sclareolide.